
CRUDE THOUGHTS.

[Entered at Stationers-hall.]

CRUDE THOUGHTS

[The end of the world]

CRUDE THOUGHTS

ON

PREVAILING SUBJECTS,

ADAPTED TO COMMON LIFE.

GAMING,	CRUELTY,	SUSPICION,
DUELLING,	INJUSTICE,	PRIDE,
SWEARING,	LYING,	AMBITION,
FREE-THINKING,	SLANDER,	CONTENTMENT,
SUICIDE,	DRINKING,	CHARITY,
FRIENDSHIP,	POLITICS,	RELIGION.

TO WHICH IS ADDED

A SHORT EPISTOLARY CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN
TOWN AND COUNTRY.

BY A CLERGYMAN OF KENT.

Ratio in cistula continetur, et omnia vincit.

Reason is contained in a little casket, and conquers all things.

In primisque hominis est propria veri inquisitio atque investigatio.

CICERO.

A proper inquiry and investigation of truth is the first object of man.

LONDON:

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1798.

CRUEL THOUGHTS

PREVAILING SUBJECTS

SELECTED BY COMMON SENSE

CRUELTY, OPPRESSION, INJUSTICE, FRAUD, DECEIT, LIES, SINFULNESS, IMPURITY, DEBAUCHERY, DRUNKENNESS, GAMING, RACE-COURSES, BLOOD-SHEDDING, WAR, CONQUEST, SLAVERY, CONSTITUTION, RAILROADS, CANNALS, POST-OFFICE, RELIGION, IMMORALITY

IN THREE VOLUMES

A MOST INTERESTING CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN
LONDON AND NEW-YORK

BY A LONDONER AND A NEW-YORKER

THE LONDONER, IN HIS LETTERS, HAS BEEN
FURNISHED WITH A FULL AND COMPLETE
EXPLANATION OF THE STATE OF THE
COUNTRY, AND THE CAUSES OF THE
PRESENT DISASTERS.

LONDON:

PRINTED AND SOLD BY
JOHN WATKINS, 10, ST. MARK'S LANE, W. 10, ST. MARK'S LANE, W.
AND BY ALL THE BOOKSELLERS IN THE KINGDOM.



TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
CHARLES LORD ROMNEY,
LORD LIEUTENANT OF THE COUNTY OF KENT.

MY LORD,

AS the object of this little manual is the improvement of human nature, I trust that when your Lordship shall have perused it, it will of itself offer a more acceptable apology for its dedication than the Author could make for it. The distinguished, and highly honourable station, which your Lordship's known virtues have called you to, justifies the presumption, that the welfare of this County in particular, and of the Country at large, is amongst the

warmest of your wishes ; and consequently, that the smallest exertions of others to promote it, will meet your Lordship's approbation.

That your Lordship may see improvements of every denomination arrive at their maturity, and long enjoy them, is the wish of,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's

Most obedient and

Devoted Servant,

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

THE intention of the following work is briefly to slip something, without study or fatigue, into the minds of young men, which, as a sentinel, may keep guard there, till they arrive at that age when it will naturally be relieved by still better watchmen—Reason and ripe Judgment. It is not expected, nor any ways calculated to arrest the impetuous torrent of vice in the midst of its career, but only to act in the hands of guardians and parents, as a small engine before a skilful fireman; which, though totally incompetent to

stemming and opposing the whole collected body of the flames, may still be very beneficially employed in defending adjoining buildings.

The Author is aware that the subjects on which he writes call for an abler and more experienced pen; nor is he unacquainted with the prejudices which usually attach to such works: he well knows that they are constantly received with distrust, and often with displeasure. It is not, however, the writer's intention to make the most indirect apology for publishing that which is annexed, since he does not arrogate to himself any peculiar merit, or claim special exemption from what he reprobates, but leaves that entirely to the observation of those with whom

he associates. And in respect to his abilities, such as they are, he wishes to render them serviceable to the community; trusting, that however his endeavours to promote the good of society, and to check the prevailing degeneracy of the age, may be received, they will, at least, be deemed consistent with the duties of his profession. And as he supposes that no man voluntarily deviates from the path of Virtue and right Reason, so he concludes that no sensible man, who shall find himself out of that path, will take offence at a work which merely informs him to that effect, without making any personal applications. If a traveller happens to miss his way in his journey, he is happy to meet with a direction-post, though it should tell him how far he has come

out of his way, because it at the same time prevents his wandering still further from the point he wishes to arrive at.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

AS the most trivial things will engage the attention of youth, so the most weighty cannot command it for any length of time. Hence a few apposite remarks and pertinent observations often make a deeper impression on young men than an elaborate, though methodical display of argumentative reasoning. From this consideration, I have endeavoured, in as concise and conspicuous a manner as possible, to expose those vices and evil habits, which I cannot but think young people imbibe, more through inadvertency and bad example, than any natural attachment to them. I have introduced my own opinion on the different subjects in this work, with apt quotations from many of the most ad-

mired and distinguished authors ; not (as some may satirically suggest) for the purpose of setting off, or dressing up what follows, but merely to relieve the mind of the reader and to direct his attention to the following head.

CRUDE THOUGHTS.

ON GAMING.

Siquid pulchri feceris cum labore; labor quidem abit; sed pulchrum manet: sin turpe quid feceris cum voluptate, voluptas abit, at turpe manet. (1)

----- The sons of riot flow down
The loose stream of false enchanted joy,
To swift destruction, On the rankled soul
The gaming fury falls; and in one gulph
Of total ruin, honour, virtue, peace,
Friends, families, and fortune, headlong sink.

THOMSON.

THE incitements to this practice are self-love, avarice, and envy. Hence the most honourable gamester is a dishonourable character. He is ever slighting what Providence has allotted him, to grasp at that which she has given for the happiness and comfort of another. If a young man plays with strangers, or those with whom he has but a slight acquaintance, it is more than

probable that he plays with rogues; and if he plays with friends, it must be at the expence of his own, or his friend's happiness.

When any one is invited to the gaming-table, he should thus meditate with himself:---suppose I am as successful as I wish to be, shall I promote my happiness at the expence of my friend's? Shall I take advantage of his misfortune, to enrich myself, in an illegal manner, out of what he possesses? Will any addition to my fortune, thus acquired, compensate for the melancholy reflection that at times will seize me, of having been instrumental in drawing down misery and distress on perhaps some worthy family? Should I then chance to be successful, is even success to be desired? Shall I be more happy when my friend is less so, and I am the cause? Yet this is all the happiness I am to expect from the entertainment I am invited to; and for this shall I set that comfort which I now possess upon a cast? I who, to day, am happy in the means of gratifying every natural desire, shall I risk that in obedience to this unnatural, dishonourable pro-

pensity? But, admitting that I should be willing to sacrifice another's happiness to my avarice, yet shall I meanly shew, that I am discontented with my own fortune, and envy my neighbour's?

If, after putting these questions home to his heart, and thus examining the merits, or rather demerits of the cause he is invited to engage in, his conscience does not return a negative verdict, he is a fit character for a Gamester:—one equally unsusceptible of all those impressions which virtue, honour, sensibility, and friendship should excite in man.

ON DUELLING.

*Quamobrem licet irrideat, si quis vult: plus apud me tamen,
vera ratio valebit quam vulgi opinio. (2)* CICERO.

Good nature and good sense must ever join;
To err is human, to forgive divine. POPE.

It is but charitable to suppose, that the sanguinary practice of duelling is kept up, more from a mistaken notion of honour and heroism, than in obedience to malice or revenge. Yet it is strange that any one should consider that action as honourable and heroic, which the smallest reflection may convince him is the direct contrary.

The character of an hero, as depicted by the ablest writers, is seldom tainted with resentment or ill-will: it displays more of discretion than temerity; his actions are uniformly great and noble, and the most heroic those where mercy and forgiveness sheathe the sword, and

compassion assuages the fury of revenge. In every gentleman, much more an hero, we expect to find a well cultivated mind, and passions disciplined; we look for a soul enlarged, and a heart better calculated to forgive than to revenge an injury. But the actions of the duellist portray brutal ferocity, and declare him the foot-ball of passions, which reason and true heroism would control. Instead of an hero, he acts the part of a selfish narrow-minded man, whose little confined soul was never permitted to expand beyond the body that enclosed it: hence its strong attachment to self; for how must that man be wrapped up in himself, who, to revenge some imaginary personal affront, would call for the life of a fellow creature! In regard to the injustice of this melancholy, yet fashionable practice, it is too conspicuous to need pointing out: nothing, however, will shew it more clearly, than the great disparity between the punishment which our laws would inflict, and that which the duellist thinks the very same crimes (if they can be called such) merit. What sort of punishment would our laws declare that man

had subjected himself to, who happened to tread upon the toe of another at the Opera? or being particularly smitten by some fair toast, should not be able to call his eyes off quite as soon as her innamorato might chuse to think a gentleman should do? and yet, with no higher provocations, challenges have been given and received.

It is astonishing how far the opinion of others, and especially of the women, will operate on our actions. A man, who never was prone to take offence, shall suddenly resent a slight affront, and actually blow his friend's brains out, in order to recommend himself to his mistress. He could readily have set down with the affront, if he did not think that it would lessen him in her eyes. But surely, to display a revengeful, quarrelsome, and cruel disposition, is a very whimsical way of conciliating the favour and good opinion of a sex, whose most distinguished and admired qualities are softness and compassion. Again, custom and habit are just as absolute, and reign as despotic in men's minds; they are

not only permitted to supersede, but to eclipse reason and sound judgment. The man who would not hesitate to send a challenge to his friend, would, at the same time, shudder at the thoughts of privately committing murder; though, setting custom aside, I know no other difference between the murderer and the duellist, than that the latter gives his antagonist an opportunity of taking his life also: but how far, in a moral and religious sense, he is less culpable than the murderer,---because when he takes another's life, he likewise sacrifices, or, at least, exposes his own, which it is equally his duty to preserve,---I leave to the conscience of the duellist to determine: to me he appears full as criminal, and adds suicide to murder.

ON SWEARING.

Hoc precipitur, ut ratio correcoat temeritatem. (3)

THE habit of swearing, in whatever light we view it, presents us with a terrible forbidding aspect. It not only argues wanton depravity, but a vitiated taste, by which men imbibe the manners of the vulgar; for swearing is a vice ascending from the lower order of the people: it is totally inconsistent with the character of a man of honour and a gentleman. To doubt the assertion of a man of honour is to insult him. But the common swearer plainly tells you by his oaths, that he does not expect you should credit his *ipse dixit*; and therefore he endeavours to strengthen what he says by breaking one of the commandments. I never hear a man, who in other respects supports the character of a gentleman, swear to any thing he asserts as matter of fact, but I call off my attention, concluding that he is telling some egregious falsehood. And

I believe I may venture to say, that this inattention to a swearer is not peculiar to myself, but the manner in which the additional argument of an oath is usually received. Thus common swearing directly tends to destroy, and not to strengthen our belief of what is told us.

ON FREE-THINKING.

Neque assentior his, qui hac nuper disserere ceperunt, cum corporibus simul animos interire, atque omnia morte deleri. (4)

Some men, under the notion of weeding out prejudices, eradicate virtue, honesty, and religion. SWIFT.

A FREE-THINKER * is become the fashionable term for a notorious free-liver. When a habit of defending vice, and scoffing at virtue, has stripped the former of its terrors, and the latter of her beauties, then every good quality is sacrificed to sensual gratification, and the man very modestly terms himself a Free-thinker. But such characters would do well to consider, that however consonant their principles of free-thinking may be to their practices of free-living, they are not quite so consonant to the duties either of an active citizen, or a social being, who must be bound by higher laws, and look up to a

* The reader will observe, that it is not the literal signification of free-thinking that the writer declaims against, but the principles which usually shelter themselves under that term.

higher and more awful tribunal than any human institutions can establish. The oaths administered to our law-givers, and to all entrusted with the dispensation of justice, involve in them a weighty and important charge, which they give us the most solemn assurance of their compliance with, and obedience to, by calling upon God. But can we suppose that a free-thinker will attend to any thing an oath enjoins him to do? Or that he who denies the existence of a God, will be assiduous in discharging those duties, which, from their nature, can only be known to God and himself? Hence it would be no difficult matter to prove, that the rights and liberties of the people, and every thing else which is held dear by social beings, are very intimately connected with religion, and are in a great measure dependant upon the influence it has on men's minds. The strongest incitement men have to a conscientious discharge of their duty, proceeds from an unshaken religious faith. But with those, whose minds are totally absorbed by worldly concerns, who have neither hope nor

fear of a future state, to excite their good actions, or to control their bad ones, there can be no doubt but that such will sacrifice the public good to private interest, in as much as self-love will ever preponderate, when put in competition with the love of others, unless conscience and religion, which direct otherwise, are attended to.

In a nation, then, where religion is laid aside, the people can place no confidence in their rulers and governors, can have no assurance that their rights and liberties will be secured to them; but, on the contrary, have every reason to believe that their dearest interests, their lives and properties, will be at the disposal of others; for human laws, to which alone such must look for protection and defence, are never effectual when they are not blended with divine.

I cannot, I think, expose the principles of Atheism, (which pass under the term of free-thinking) and shew the dangerous tendency they

have, better than by putting a very easy and familiar case. Suppose any one amongst us was arraigned, though innocent as we leave our cradles, and was brought to the bar of a tribunal, which he knew professed no fear of God, no hopes of a future state. What would be his thoughts? Where would he place his confidence? In his innocence? It should, and would be placed there, was he before men who believed that they were acting under the immediate inspection of the Almighty; but with such, his dependence must be on his ability to make it appear, that he did not stand in the way of those who should be appointed to try him, and that his death would not be conducive to their interest. How deplorable then would be his case, if in his judge he should perceive his enemy: a judge, who, when shut up from the eye of this world, acknowledges no eye more piercing, no judge more awful, no hereafter, where he himself should one day be called, to give an account of his actions!

ON SUICIDE.

But if there's an hereafter,
 And that there is, conscience, unfluenc'd,
 And suffer'd to speak out, tells every man;
 Then must it be an awful thing to die:
 More horrid yet, to die by one's own hand.
 Self murder! name it not---our Island's shame,
 That makes her the reproach of neighbouring states.

BLAIR.

THE murderer braves the laws of God and man; but the suicide dares still further, and violates, in addition to these, the first law of nature, viz. self-preservation. God has thought fit to impress upon the soul of man such a lively sense of the necessity of preserving his person from violence or harm, that he acts instantaneously, and, as it were, involuntarily in its defence, when any sudden danger threatens it. If then the Almighty has purposely impressed man with this intuitive watchfulness, how great an offence must it be to him for any one to let his passion rise superior to it, or to indulge a furor

of the mind to such a degree, as finally to overcome the faculties of the soul !

The suicide first dismisses his soul, for he who clogs it so, as to be no longer sensible of its operations, may be said to dismiss it ; and in that state presents himself in the presence of his judge. But besides the iniquity of the act, which is too glaring to need further comment, there is something very disgraceful and even cowardly in it.

Most men are emulous of leaving behind them some mark of honour and respect, which may attach to their names, and be transmitted to posterity ; and it is a laudable ambition which excites to the most heroic actions and exalted virtues : but how contrary is the temper of the suicide, who cowardly and unmanly sculks out of life, and thereby stamps an indelible stigma on his name, or for ever buries it in oblivion. And what is the life he is so impatient to part with ? a mere vapour at the most, and of no certain tenure ; for what he knows, the next hour may

bring him that relief which he this plunges into blood to catch at. But though a moment carries him out of this world, does he remember that the same moment places him in another of eternal duration? If the transitory sufferings of this present life are so intolerable as to frighten him out of this world, how dares he face those eternal torments which are threatened him in the next!

Such are the different vicissitudes and sudden changes of fortune which may attend any one in this present state, that, in many instances, he who to-day is most miserable, may to-morrow be the most happy, and *vice versa*. But not so hereafter; for there, such as he is after he has received his doom, such shall he be till time shall be no more.

ON CRUELTY.

Dear sensibility! source inexhausted of all that's precious in our joys, or costly in our sorrows! Thou chainest thy martyr down upon his bed of straw: and it is thou who liftest him up to Heaven.

STERNE.

THE cruelties exercised by children on the brute creation, are certainly as unseemly and disgusting to a feeling mind, as they are prejudicial to the morals and dispositions of youth. When children, through a habit of torturing insects, (and indeed animals of almost every species) have made themselves familiar to the sufferings and miseries of others, they presently acquire a sort of relish for tyranny and oppression, their feelings grow callous, their appetites sanguinary and ferocious; that inhuman propensity, which they were permitted, while children, to indulge, insensibly gains ground upon them, and frequently destroys that sensibility and sympathy of soul which is the most distinguishing quality, and perhaps the greatest ornament of human nature.

These considerations alone, independent of every other, should induce parents to suppress this vile habit in children whenever it presents itself. But was such a practice attended with no bad consequences to youth, still, surely the dumb and defenceless state of the brute creation, their inability to defend themselves, and to communicate their sufferings to others, should at least entitle them to lenity and good usage; should give them a claim upon our protection, as rational creatures; and should induce us to prevent others, as far as we are able, from exercising wanton cruelty upon them.

ON INJUSTICE.

Nihil nec expedire, nec utile esse, quod sit injustum. (5)

IT is a common observation, that a man is less wounded at being called a rogue than a fool. Yet the former appellation charges him with crimes of his own begetting, and which he is actually responsible for, and the latter imputes no blame to him at all; in as much as foolishness is merely a defect in nature, and is not of his own acquiring. But perhaps those terms are more analogous than at first hearing we are apt to consider them; for though every weak man may not be a rogue, yet every rogue must be a weak man.

Roguery may be defined, either a departing from that rectitude of action, which our consciencies, and an innate sense of what is just, inform us of; or a contempt of that controul,

and a withholding of our obedience from those injunctions which society unanimously determine should be binding to every individual, because that every individual is benefited by them. The first lapse naturally introduces the second; for when a man has worn out that impression, which a just sense of right and wrong makes upon his mind, he has nothing to check him from acts of the greatest injustice but his sense of fear. Now it is the part of a wise man to cultivate and refine every sense he has, and particularly to preserve those impressions of the soul, which were intended as guides and directors of his actions. Those who find that they have no other impediments to the performance of a dishonest act than their sense of fear, often venture on the commission of it, through a hope of being able to conceal it from the world; by which means they frequently expose themselves to punishment and public ignominy; and then, when it is too late, they are made sensible, that nature had not endowed them with any superfluous faculties, and that those finer feelings which

they had suppressed would have saved them from that disgrace and misery which the want of them had laid them open to.

But though a man should be able to conceal his dishonesty from the world, yet how must it lessen him in his own opinion of himself. He who secretly defrauds or robs another, will at times reflect, that there is no other difference between himself and the culprit, who is hung out of the way like a dog, (being deemed too great a nuisance to dwell any longer with his kindred) than that such a one's offence is made public, and that his own is concealed.

The speculator, who oftener loses than gains by his speculations, is universally deemed a weak man. And is not this the case with every dishonest man? His injustice hardly ever, in the long run, promotes his interest, never his happiness, and not often his present gain; for where there is a want of probity there generally is a want of success; yet for it he not only barter

away his peace of mind, his reputation, and the confidence and good opinion of those around him, but he subjects himself to contempt, disgrace, and contumely of every kind.

ON LYING.

Si tu velis esse Tbraso, Gnatbo nusquam deerit tibi. (6)

INDEPENDENT of that disgrace which is ever inseparable from the character of a liar, there are still greater discouragements to this ungentlemanly practice. The man who is in the habit of asserting falsehoods, will seldom be believed when he relates matter of fact: but who would indulge himself in this idle habit, if he believed that he should shortly be struck dumb for so doing? Yet, next to being dumb, is that of having no credit given to what one asserts.

Whoever finds himself inclined to romance in company, should remember, that the entertainment he affords the company that way will be at the expence of his own credit; and that however his stories may excite the pleasantry of those around him, they will proportionably excite their

contempt. I have often seen a vain-glorious confident romancer elated in company, from having met with more attention, and created more mirth, than even he himself expected: not perceiving that the attention, for the most part, is no other than admiration of his assurance; and that the hilarity proceeds from a consciousness in the company that he is sinking in their opinion as fast as he imagines himself to be rising. To such a Thraso frequently starts up a Gnatho, who purposely indulges the vein his friend is got into, in order to render him still more contemptible to the rest of the company.

ON SLANDER.

Hænugæ seriâ ducunt in mala. (7)

HOR.

Who steals my purse, steals trash: 'tis something, nothing; 'twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands: but he who filches from me my good name, robs me of that which nought enriches him, and makes me poor indeed.

SHAKESPEARE.

SLANDER cannot be defended in any one point of view; and hence, perhaps, the less merit is due to those who would expose it. But when we consider its tendency, the unhappiness and mischief it often occasions, surely every effort to suppress it, or at least to prevent its spreading to the rising generation, is commendable.

If the world in general were but half as desirous of preserving their own comfort, happiness, and reputation, as they are of destroying one another's, they would unanimously decree its total extirpation. But, instead of that, there is not a failing incident to human nature, more

universally patronized and encouraged. Some adopt it through natural malevolence, others in return for injuries they have received by it; but by far the greater part, through envy, and a consciousness of their own disrepute. Slander would never have prevailed amongst us, if it never had been countenanced; nor would ever, I think, have been countenanced, if it had been rightly considered. For the most part, we may look upon the slanderer as one, who, possessing few or no virtues of his own, would willingly acquire a comparative degree of worth by detracting from the good qualities of others. And what character can be more dangerous, unsocial, or offensive? To-day he labours to give me an ill opinion of my neighbour; to-morrow he will be just as industrious to give my neighbour an ill opinion of me. When a slanderer addresses himself to any one, let him only withhold his attention, while he argues thus with himself:--- Why does this man hold me by the button, and seem so desirous of calling my attention to another's failings? Why does he wish to degrade

this person, or to lessen my respect for that? and the slanderer will immediately sink in his opinion beneath the slandered: instead of lending him his ear, he will precipitately break from him.

There certainly is not a character which merits universal detestation more than that of a general slanderer; for, as such a one bespatters indiscriminately all around him, so no one is safe, however circumspect his conduct may be. The virtuous, if they come within his focus, stand no better, if not a worse chance than the most profligate, in as much as his object is to blight and wither reputation wherever he finds it. "No might nor greatness in mortality," saith Shakespeare, "can censure 'scape; backwounding calumny the whitest virtue strikes. What king so strong, can tie the gall up in a slanderous tongue?"

If the slanderer, under the instigation of envy or revenge, exercises his talent against his own

sex, he acts the part of a cowardly assassin, who would do another that injury in secret, the dread of deserved punishment alone deters him from doing openly. If the favours he has received, or little eccentricities of the fair sex, form matter for his over facetious whisper, how truly despicable, how much beneath the dignity of man, is the character of such a one; who first invites the female mind astray, and next, instead of becoming as her only, so her sure support and defence against that calumny he has exposed her to, is the first to load the unhappy creature with uncharitable reflections for past follies !

Those who are in the habit of calumniating others, should consider, that they give a general invitation to malevolence and distrust: for they become the reputed authors of all the scandal and defamation which may at any time be circulating amongst their acquaintance, though they themselves should be perfectly innocent of it; and the very person who at one time will enjoy, and appear highly entertained, at any ill-

natured thing the slanderer may throw out against another, will no sooner hear that something unpleasant is abroad against himself, than he will conclude it comes from the same quarter, and resentment and distrust will naturally follow.

There are those who cannot forbear saying ill-natured things of their neighbours, and yet are aware, that many troubles and inconveniences attend the character of a slanderer.--- These generally go cautiously to work, and endeavour to conceal their malevolence under the mask of compassion, pity, and condolence.--- They trust that they shall be able to divert your attention from the object they have in view, viz. their neighbour's discredit, by some very ingenious and plausible circumlocution. But with all their finesse and chicanery, the demon is still conspicuous, and only appears the more deformed by the finery which they throw about him.

ON DRINKING.

Vini potu moderato hilarari animum,

Immoderato, rixas excitari. (8)

HOR.

To be now a sensible man, by and by a fool, and presently a beast ! Every inordinate cup is unblest'd, and the ingredient is a devil.

SHAKSPEARE.

THERE are few gratifications which it is not lawful for us to indulge in a degree; but excess in any one of them creates the direct contrary effect to that which it was intended to produce. For, as the Almighty has given us richly all things to enjoy, so he has thought fit to check our abuse of them, by making a moderate use conduce to our happiness and comfort; an immoderate one to our pain and uneasiness. A moderate use of the grape invigorates both mind and body, it quickens our desires, and awakens every sense and passion of the soul, without diminishing in any degree the necessary restraint and controul which reason holds over them.--- Wine has a very similar effect on man to that

of the sun on the vegetable world. A certain portion of it braces and strengthens every nerve, enlivens the imagination, and expands the mind; but imbibed to excess, it relaxes the whole man, scorches up the body, confuses the senses, and disorders, equally and in toto, the corporeal and mental system.

I am apt to think that there are very few who drink wine to excess by inclination. Men are generally led into it by the example and intreaty of others. In private, as well as public companies, a fear of being thought inhospitable or penurious in the entertainer, and of appearing singular, or of disturbing the conviviality of the company, in the entertained, have made more drunkards than any natural attachment to the glass. But one would think that this consideration alone would dissuade the principal from pressing a single glass upon his guests; that he is responsible, in a moral sense, for all the troubles, accidents, broils, and dissensions which his over good fellowship may at any time occa-

sion. And the entertained one would suppose, if he weighed the matter rightly, would find it more reasonable to give up his scruples and complaisance at such a time, than his senses, his discretion, and the natural defence of his person, which must otherwise be sacrificed to them.

I do not know that I ever read or heard of the first introduction of wine into company ; but there can be no doubt, I think, that it was brought less to please the palate than to exhilarate the spirits of the company, and to render them more sociable, by quickening their sense of pleasure, and enlivening their hearts and minds. But these effects are no sooner produced by the Anacreons of the present age, than they hasten to overpower and extinguish them. Like children who amuse themselves with building card-castles on the carpet, when they have got the building to a certain height, they admire it for a minute or two only, and then hastily build on, till, by the additional weight of a few more cards, down comes the whole edifice.

I would ask, what is the principal pleasure we promise ourselves from company? or for what purpose do we assemble together? Is it not for the natural entertainment of each other, by the exercise of our rational faculties? If that is not the end, we may as well send invitations to our kennels or sheep folds; if noise and confusion are all we wish for, the howling of dogs and the bleating of sheep would give it us in perfection. It must surely then be very irrational, to set down almost as soon as we come together, and endeavour, one and all, to extinguish those intellects which we came together purposely to entertain each other with.

ON THE IMPROPRIETY
OF DISCUSSING
POLITICS
IN PRIVATE COMPANIES.

THE English are spoken of by foreigners as a nation of politicians, from the great desire they manifest of discussing politics in private companies. The subject is, nevertheless, much too intricate for common debate, and involves matters which require such a source of information to penetrate into, and form a determination of the merits or demerits of, as few individuals possess. But if there is a time in which we ought more particularly to avoid the topic, it is that which we spend over the bottle; notwithstanding it is at this time that the subject most insinuates itself, and is oftenest discussed.

This failing in our nature (for it merits no better term) is very easily accounted for. The

mind fills as naturally as the bottle empties, and a great degree of loquacity is thereby created. Now it is natural, that, as this talkative propensity prevails, there should be a desire in the company to start some general topic, and politics is usually the first that presents itself. But we should remember, that there is hardly a subject which admits of more variety of opinions, and to which men are more warmly attached, than that of politics; and, consequently, that there is hardly a subject more improper to be discussed at a time when men are less under the influence of reason than passion.

Would a man of judgment think it prudent to publish his opinion on any popular topic at a time when he was off his guard? Certainly not. But more than that, political debates are generally supported at the expence of that pleasantry and cheerfulness, which should be the first object of friends, who meet together mutually to promote each other's happiness.

ON SUSPICION.

Dangerous conceits are in their nature poisons, which at the first are scarce found to distaste; but with a little act upon the blood, and burn like the mines of sulphur.

SHAKESPEARE.

THOUGH the smallest observation on the actions of others might convince us how far this troublesome propensity preys upon, and wastes the happiness of men, yet by many it is encouraged under the specious mask of penetration: though suspicion and penetration never act in unison, nor ever can, the one being much too rash and active for the other. The one takes reason for her guide, the other passion. When this failing prevails with any one, it not only subjects him to the caprice and merriment of any idle fellow who chooses to amuse himself by playing with his passions, but it also lays him open to his enemies, and to unprincipled designing men, who know how to make their market of another's failings.

Suspicion is not liked or countenanced by the most credulous, under that title; it is no longer courted by any one than while it wears the garb of truth. As soon as it is known to be suspicion, it is instantly renounced, even by those who have cherished it. It is not like other failings, difficult to be got rid of in *propria persona*, from our attachments to them; but is universally discarded as soon as it is discovered. The misfortune is, that those who indulge suspicion always mistake it for discernment. But as it is the interest of every one to judge impartially, that he may be open to conviction; so he should often suppress the dictates of passion, to listen more attentively to the voice of reason. Whoever searches after concealed facts, in which he has an interest, will find nothing more difficult than to make suspicion keep pace with reason. It will be his most active opponent throughout his researches.

A suspicious man may easily convince himself how liable he is to deception, by supposing any the most unlikely circumstance to have taken

place; for he will no sooner have let loose his thoughts on such a supposition, than he will find corroborating circumstances flow in upon him as fast and as naturally as if it had been really true.

ON PRIDE.

----- Thence raise,
 At last, distemper'd discontented thoughts;
 Vain hopes, vain aims, inordinate desires,
 Blown up with high conceits, ingend'ring pride.

MILTON, PAR. LOST. b. iv.

PRIDE is almost the only weakness which men seem indifferent about concealing from the eye of the world; and is, nevertheless, more necessary to be concealed, in order to further the wishes of those who indulge it, than any other.

The object of the proud is to acquire veneration, honour, and respect; and they suppose that a lofty, authoritative deportment, will command it. But though a supercilious carriage is apt to brow-beat and intimidate little minds, and thereby to enforce from them the exterior of respect; it has a very different effect upon men of discernment, and who possess minds informed. With such, respect sinks in the exact same pro-

portion that pride is discovered ; for they do not take up their notions of a man's greatness and consequence from the opinion he seems to have of them himself, but penetrate into the properties of his mind, and look to the man, as well as his possessions and personal consequence, and then give him what degree of respect they may together entitle him to. Hence a proud man has usually a very small share allotted him, however great his possessions, or his opinion of himself may be, because he appears deficient in his intellects; inasmuch as pride is a convincing proof of great futility and weakness in the mind of its possessor, and shews him a man of little penetration, of very superficial judgment, and one who sees every thing through a false medium. Most other weaknesses are beheld by men with a degree of compassion, and every allowance is willingly made for the frailty of human nature ; but pride is a weakness that the possessors of it seem to glory in, which renders it so peculiarly offensive to beholders, that they do not feel themselves inclined to make that al-

lowance for it which other infirmities usually receive. Moreover, a proud haughty carriage raises in our minds an association of ideas exceedingly unfriendly to those in whom we perceive it; we connect with it a long train of base and unworthy passions; such as self-love, envy, hatred, malice, and cruelty; and which are too often its concomitants. Envy and cruelty are almost inseparably connected with pride; the former shews itself in that spirit of emulation, which pride constantly excites; the latter, in the desire of humbling and overbearing others. For the proud man not only assumes a vast deal more consequence than he is entitled to, but he cannot bear that another should possess even that share of it which properly and necessarily attaches to his rank in life. A man of spirit, when he finds himself in company with a proud man, will frequently assume more consequence than, he knows, belongs to him, that he may not be deficient by what the other means to take away from him. The proud seem to challenge, as it were, the whole world. They carry in their countenance

an air of defiance, which every one looks upon himself as called upon to resent; and on that account they may be said to be in a state of enmity with all the world. And is that a state likely to produce happiness? But there is this to be said in defence of pride, that it is mostly constitutional; and that it is not in every man's power to control it, or to direct his disposition. There are many too who carry a stately front, and thereby incur the character of being proud, who have, nevertheless, as much goodness at heart as a cursory observer would suppose there was pride.

ON AMBITION.

Ambition often puts men upon doing the meanest offices; so climbing is performed in the same posture with creeping.

SWIFT.

AMBITION may be considered either as a virtue or a vice, according to the direction which our inclinations give it. When it influences our actions in promoting any public good, it is then a conspicuous virtue. But when it becomes the principle of action in a little mind which is wholly occupied on personal advancement, independent of every public consideration, here it often contracts itself into a vice. Again, it may soar into enthusiasm, through a misguided zeal; or degenerate into error, by receiving its direction from pride and ostentation.

Roman history abundantly supplies us with instances of the former, viz. of enthusiastic am-

bition: and there is a story which I have somewhere read, very explanatory of the latter.

Two rivals happened to be in company with their mistress at the same time, when she fell by accident off a bridge into a pool; upon which the young men were both so ambitious of being her rescuer, that a battle ensued, and before victory could determine which should save her, the woman was drowned.

Ambition is not calculated to promote our happiness, and is often attended with fatal consequences. In active spirits, where it most prevails, it is seldom tempered with discretion, and is very apt to take prejudice rather than judgment for its guide. Hence it is, that you often see men affecting vices, and ambitious of being thought what every man of judgment would condemn. This kind of ambition makes men intent on acquiring rather than meriting popular applause. It is not from any greatness of soul or innate sense of honour and merit that they derive

their satisfaction, but from the admiration of a
an undiscerning multitude. Such merely court
fame, and are perfectly indifferent as to the sub-
ject on which it is founded. They are so in-
tent on the effect, that the cause which pro-
duces it appears to them as a secondary object.
Of this description may be considered all those
innovating penmen, who busy themselves as
much in overturning every system of morality,
and every principle of religion, as others (who
have really the happiness and welfare of their
country at heart) exert themselves in their de-
fence. Both these descriptions of men have
their principle of action, and what they respec-
tively produce, is the natural offspring of that
principle. The former have their eye fixed on
the admiration of a multitude; and so as they
acquire it, it matters not to them whether they
gain it by doing mankind an injury or a service.
Their services are very similar to those of an
over kind and complying nurse, who would ad-
minister spirits to her patient, because she knew
he liked them, though at the same time they were

prohibited by his physician, and were likely to produce the most fatal consequences. These men know that vice is more prevalent and more popular than virtue; and very naturally conclude, that they shall find it less difficult to compass their wishes, by promoting the one than the other. But the latter description of men look only to the good effects of their labours on the great bulk of mankind; and their reward is not left to the public, to give or withhold it from them; they look for it where they are sure to find it, viz. within their own bosoms. They receive more satisfaction from the consciousness of having made the most of their talent, and of having really merited public esteem, than those can do, who, without having merited, may be in the possession of it.

The desire of fame is, nevertheless, a very proper and natural accompaniment in the performance of a great action, and does not in the least detract from its merit; for, whoever undertakes and accomplishes a meritorious act, must of

course be strongly impressed with a sense of its utility and importance; and it is very natural for such a one to wish, that the world in general should see it in the same light as he does, which is all that a proper desire of fame excites. But where, instead of an accompaniment, the desire of fame is the *primum nobile* of an action, and the chief gratification which the actor proposes to himself in what he performs, in this case the most heroic and distinguished actions cannot be considered as a virtue in the performer, but merely as the price he pays for public renown; and as the world in general are not very fond of having their good or ill opinions bought and sold, such a one usually finds himself disappointed in his purchase.

There is another shape in which ambition presents itself, and that a very unfavourable one. We have many instances of men, who, by an active industrious spirit, have acquired for themselves and their family all the comforts of life, when they have attempted, through the influ-

ence of ambition, to aspire at still greater heights, and have been suddenly precipitated far beneath their former state. This false ambition is very conspicuous in that spirit of emulation which is discernible amongst all ranks and descriptions of people: it is, if any thing, more prevalent in the middling walks of life, than in the rich and fashionable. But men in general are less intent upon considering what sort of equipage and appearance will be proper and consistent with their station in life, than in copying the appendages of men greatly above them; not considering that they are just as much out of character, when they affect an appearance above their rank in life, as if they made one as much beneath it. This spirit of vying is certainly the very worst description of ambition, and is not less contemptible in its appearance than it is injurious in its consequences. We may trace its effects to gaming-tables and bankruptcies, and even to forgeries and suicides.

The man who, when he first sets off in life, takes a model above his ability to imitate in the establishment of his household, and the expenditure of his income, must as necessarily be foiled in time, as the singer who should pitch his voice greatly above the natural key.

ON CONTENTMENT.

Quibꝫs nihil opis est in ipsis ad bene beateque vivendum, iis omnis gravis est ætas: qui autem omnia bona a se ipsis petunt, iis nihil potest malum videri, quod natura necessitas afferat. (10)

CICERO.

-----Contentment walks

The sunny glade, and feels an inward bliss
Spring o'er her heart, beyond the power of
Kings to purchase.

THOMSON.

PERHAPS no argument in favour of contentment will promote it as much as a little observation on men and manners, by which we shall perceive that happiness is not to be found in any external object, but must be raised and cherished in our own bosoms. When we cannot find happiness in those things which we possess, we hastily conclude that she resides in those we do not, and consequently search for and endeavour to obtain them with eagerness; but we no sooner command that enchantment, which we have so anxiously pursued, and kept our eye upon, as the sure habitation of bliss and happiness, than

we find it an empty castle of delusion, from whence we behold happiness still forward on some fair eminence, just as distant as before :--- and thus through life man pursues an imaginary good, till, at length, tired and disappointed with the chase, he coolly and dispassionately looks around him, and finds her a peaceable matron,* inhabiting the very spot he first started from; where, had he stayed at home, and made himself acquainted with her, he would have enjoyed all that comfort and satisfaction which in his youthful days she was capable of bestowing upon him; but now, like him, they together feel the infirmity of age.

I can recollect that I was very desirous, when a child, of being carried into the blue country (which is no other than an effect produced by distance) and of feeling myself sensibly disappointed when I arrived there, and was told that that was the spot which I saw from the place I

* Contentment.

set out from, at finding it no pleasanter than the country I had left; and at seeing the part which appeared to me so beautiful no nearer than before. And very similar, I take it, is our pursuit after perfect happiness. The truth is, that happiness is no where to be enjoyed but in a limited degree; and that as much of it as man is permitted to compass, is totally independent of state, wealth, or fame. He, indeed, whose mind may be fixed upon some darling acquisition, will consider this as a very whimsical and romantic kind of philosophy, till he is in possession of his jewel; but then its lustre will begin to diminish, and his eyes being no longer dazzled with its splendour, he will see clearly that truth which now seems wrapped up in a cloud of enthusiasm: for the mind is naturally contracted, while its whole bent is directed to any one object; but as soon as it is set at liberty from that, it gradually opens and expands; and then, all objections to contentment, and all the madness of ambition, vanish away, as shadows before the rising sun.

The desire of bettering his condition is peculiar to man; and it is natural it should be so, since he alone possesses a knowledge of those troubles and difficulties which he may either avoid or be involved in. But this desire, like many others, is often much too violent, and by its indiscreet ardour, will frequently defeat the very purpose it is most anxious to accomplish. Whatever a man's present condition is, he knows exactly all the troubles and all the enjoyments which attach to it; but that which he is looking to, and is willing to exchange his present state for, is frequently an untried one, and is often made to appear superior to that which he parts with for it, by the tawdry trappings which novelty and inexperience dress it up in. It is not the desire of bettering our condition we should act upon, but the conviction, from reason unprejudiced, that we have it in our power to exchange our present state for one which, upon trial, will prove a better.

It is surprising that the shortness of this life, and the very uncertain tenure we hold it at, does not damp and even extinguish that violent propensity for novelty and variety which prevails so much amongst us. When we consider that scarce a century shall sweep the living world, and, with very few exceptions, include the veriest infant that now draws breath, how idle does it seem for us to be looking beyond the immediate enjoyment of that which we possess! How poor the indulgence of an envious discontented spirit, when we consider that a few fleeting moments shall lay the richest, the most honourable, on the same wide plain, where with the monarch rests the abject poor! How vain and thoughtless is it to be calling our whole attention off what we are, and fixing it solely on what we would be, when a few days must, and the next moment may tell us, that we are no longer to be at all in this world! To be spreading and enlarging our plans and views of life, when life itself is but a walking shadow, a poor player (as Shakspeare expresses

it) that struts and frets his hour upon the stage, and then is heard no more !

I should be very sorry to have it thought that I confined my ideas to the living world, and was incapable of furthering my views to the good of posterity : so far from that, I think that the living ought to carry into effect every thing that they know, and are assured will contribute to the happiness of those who are to live after them ; provided they do not extend their views so far beyond their powers, as to lose sight of that justice and humanity which they owe to themselves, as well as to their successors. But, I confess, there appears to me to be more of Quixotism, than reason or philanthropy, in the actions of the busy men of our time. For, would reason or love, or both together, direct men to knock each other's brains out, in order to secure an imaginary or at least doubtful excellence, for the benefit of survivors ? Who, when they have tried the beloved system of happiness, which their ancestors, out of great kind-

ness and good will, sacrificed their lives to procure for them, will very probably only deprecate their officiousness, and, in their turn, knock each other's brains out to get rid of it, and to compass that which their forefathers rejected.

There is something so deceitful, changeable, and inconstant, even in our own opinions upon things, as to make it almost criminal to prosecute any favourite dogma with an inordinate degree of warmth. If we would enjoy the blessing of contentment, let us take care that our wishes and desires do not swell themselves beyond our powers of gratification. Let us endeavour to fix our attention solely on the comforts we possess. For, as by pruning a young tree it receives fresh vigour; so by keeping our passions in a small compass, we render them exquisitely sensible of pleasure, and susceptible of all those impressions which constitute the most perfect happiness we enjoy, and consequently contentment.

ON FRIENDSHIP.

Quid dulcius quam habere, qui cum omnia audeas sic loqui, ut tecum? Quis esset tantus fructus in prosperis rebus, nisi haberes, qui illis æque, ac tu ipse gauderet? (11) CICERO.

THIS observation of Cicero's is at once so beautiful and comprehensive of what constitutes true friendship, as almost to preclude any further comment upon the subject. There cannot be a clearer or better definition of friendship, than that of a certain knowledge which any two persons have of each other's hearts and minds, whereby they can repose the greatest secrets, with as much confidence in each other, as they themselves would meditate upon them. And, as this confidence and assurance which one person has of another's heart and well wishes, produce the greatest happiness of friendship, by expanding our minds, and rendering us more susceptible of pleasure; so likewise they comprehend all the benefits and advantages arising from it.

Human nature is prone to err, and is continually wanting such kind of admonition, as can alone come from those, whose hearts beat true to the interests and welfare of their friends;--- who take a like care, and are equally concerned in every thing which befalls them; whose opinions, when solicited upon any matter, however trivial or important, will be exactly such as they themselves would square their own conduct by.

But as the pleasures and benefits of true friendship are great, so likewise is the difficulty of finding those whose principles and dispositions are properly tuned and adapted to it.

Our friendships and partialities are seldom directed by reason or discretion; but mostly (like a softer passion) are the result and offspring of numerous little occurrences and sympathies, which we never take time to consider the merits of, or to know whether they are praise-worthy or reprehensible. Thus we often find ourselves

attached to others, not from any peculiar goodness or excellence which we discover in their dispositions, but from a certain coincidence with our own manners and peculiarities, be they good or bad. The consequence of which is, that common friendships are rather a spur to our passions and frailties, than purifiers of the heart and correctors of our manners. The voluptuary calls him his friend, who readily falls in with all his extravagances and idle eccentricities. The proud ambitious man thinks him his friend, who possessess the mean and servile talent of adulation; though such a one certainly deserves to rank only with his enemies; for there is no property so desireable, and so indispensably necessary in a friend, as that of candour and ingenuousness. If, then, we would avail ourselves of the benefits of friendship, and would not sacrifice every thing to the impulse of the moment, we must call reason and discretion to our aid in the choice of our friends.

The essential qualities requisite in those with whom we would form strong friendships, are good sense, sound judgment, and much sensibility.

ON CHARITY.

Oh! is there not some patriot, in whose power,
 That best, that god-like luxury is plac'd
 Of blessing thousands, thousands yet unborn
 Thro' late posterity? some large of soul,
 To cheer dejected Industry? to give
 A double harvest to the pining swain?
 And teach the labouring hand the sweets of toil?

THOMSON.

It must certainly be as grateful to the feelings of every Briton, as it is honourable to his national character, that a door is effectually shut against extreme distress, in his native country. But this is a provision which acknowledges the impulse of necessity, as well as that of charity, in its establishment, and leaves a wide field open for the affluent to exercise their beneficence in.

It is undoubtedly highly praise-worthy, and truly philanthropic, for any one to administer medicine to the sick, comfort to the afflicted, and relief to the poor and needy. But it is still

more philanthropic to arrest the power of disease before it has seized its prey : to defend and save another from any affliction, than to comfort him when sinking under it : to lend an assisting hand to honesty and labour, when we find them (however unequally matched) nobly contending with misery and distress, than after they are overcome, to dress the wounds they have received in the combat. True charity should not only be ready to answer the calls of misery and distress, from the gloomy pit of affliction, but should be assiduous in defending and blocking up the bye-ways that lead to it. If the merits of the labouring poor were closely inspected, and timely assistance was privately given to those who deserved and stood in need of it ; numbers would be enabled to keep their little possessions. Their industry and attention to business would thereby be roused, and an attachment to their country, and to those laws which protect their property, naturally excited ; or, if they have it, preserved. Moreover, there is an innate pride and sense of shame which

every Englishman is born with, that should never be overcome, but cherished as the surest antidote against vice, and the best promoter of virtue. There are many among the industrious labouring poor, who will submit to the greatest hardships, rather than outrage this nice sense of shame. But if, after struggling hard with poverty and distress, they are at length driven to seek relief from their parish; this pride is no more. Their spirit is broken down, and, feeling themselves degraded, they are no longer anxious to keep up their credit, by living soberly and honestly themselves, and seeing that their family do the same; but dismiss all those ideas, and soon grow callous to appearances; become totally regardless of what others think of them; and no longer depending on their industry for support, they now find it their interest to make as abject and deplorable an appearance as they can, in order to excite compassion and relief from their parish. The money which the man earns, and which before was laid out upon the family, or great part of it to keep up credit,

able appearances, is now carried to the ale-house; where liquor inflaming a mind already warped by misfortune, he becomes a fit dupe either for the lawless banditti, or the more designing promoters of confusion.

Every means that reason and invention can suggest, for checking the influx of parish poor, should certainly be adopted. For, was charity out of the question, it is the interest of the country to lessen the number of extreme poor. The popularity and stability of government will proportionably decrease in every country, as the poor of that country increase. The fewer become interested in the protection of property, consequently the fewer are attached to those laws by which it is protected. One of the principal causes of the increased number of parish poor, appears to be the monopoly of farms; and the advanced price of most of the necessaries of life, which it in a great measure creates. But another, almost as productive in its tendency, is the partial support given by the community to trades-

men and mechanics. The world in general are too apt to dispense their favours to the prosperous, the fanciful, or the enterprising, in preference to the poor and necessitous. You shall see people too, who are annually giving vast sums to different charities, racking their carriage wheels over the stones of London (through a mistaken notion of œconomy), in order to cheapen goods, when, perhaps, in the very next street there might be a man sinking under the increase of his family, and the necessary calls of government upon him, who sold the very things they have been in quest of.

There certainly might be one of the best directed and most acceptable charities conferred, by a judicious disposal of public favour, with little or no expence to individuals. The utility of administering assistance to necessitous and deserving tradesmen and mechanics, in this way, is very conspicuous; for the poor man receives such assistance with vigour and spirit, consider-

ing it as the reward of his industry and attention to business. And instead of having his spirits broken down, and his mind relaxed, by the degrading reflection of having applied for parochial relief; he is conscious only of having received that support from the community at large, which his occupation entitled him to look for. It may be objected, perhaps, that those to whom a relief of this kind would be serviceable are generally too much sunk, to keep a sufficient stock of goods by them, to supply accidental customers with what they at any time should want: but the tradesman, no doubt, would find means to obviate this difficulty with those who came purposely to serve him: indeed, the increase of his trade alone would soon procure an increase of his goods. And there are many tradesmen and mechanics, with large families, to whom a little help and assistance, in the way of their business, would be exceedingly acceptable, who are, notwithstanding, many removes from abject wretchedness, though in a declining state. Upon the whole, the system of keeping up is

as indispensably necessary, as that of making provision for those already down; and is far more comfortable to the unfortunate, as well as more beneficial to the community at large.

ON RELIGION.

----- That thou art happy, owe to God:
 That thou continu'st such, owe to thyself;
 That is, to thy obedience: therein stand.
 This was that caution giv'n thee; be advis'd!
 God made thee perfect, not immutable;
 And good he made thee; but to persevere
 He left it in thy pow'r; ordain'd thy will
 By nature free, not over-rul'd by fate
 Inextricable, or strict necessity.
 Our voluntary service he requires,
 Not our necessitated; such with him
 Finds no acceptance, nor can find: for how
 Can hearts not free, be try'd whether they serve
 Willing or no, who will but what they must
 By destiny, and can no other chuse?

MILTON, PAR. LOST. b. v.

RELIGION is allowed to be both the patron and parent of virtue. Now if virtue is, as one of the most eloquent of the antients asserts, no other than right reason, that cannot be contrary to it, on which it is founded.

But what can be more natural, as well as reasonable, than that the same God, who has

taken such conspicuous care in the formation of our bodies, should be still more attentive to the improvement of our minds. Experience evinces that the mind of man is susceptible of great improvement, though no one can ascertain the exact degree of perfection it is capable of arriving at. Experience likewise affords us melancholy proof that it is subject to great degeneracy.--- Now we find, throughout nature, a desire in the Divine Work-master of rendering every part of his creation as nearly perfect as it may be.

If we look to the brute creation, we see them necessarily, by instinct, fulfilling the purposes for which they were created. If we look up to the heavens, we there behold the whole universe most orderly obeying the will of the Almighty ; but in their obedience there is no virtue, in as much as there was no power given to them of withholding it. It pleased, therefore, the great God of Heaven and Earth to form a being who, like himself, should possess some share of that divine essence, which constitutes his own being,

viz. virtue. To accomplish that end, it was necessary, too, that he should bear a distant resemblance to him, in the freedom of action; and that having a will of his own, he might exercise the faculties of his soul, and might keep up not an obligatory, but a voluntary, and consequently virtuous, connection with the Divine Author of his being.

With such intentions, God made man a free agent, and placed him at the head of his creation. And to prevent his falling away from his original and natural purity, and thereby disordering the great universal system of perfection, God implanted in his breast a most rigid and ingenuous monitor, which should condemn him for every deviation from the path of virtue; and should direct him in the discharge of such duties as were assigned him. Man, however, by the abuse of that power, with which he was necessarily invested, fell from his original purity; and at length lost sight of that supreme good which alone could animate and preserve his soul. In

such a state of things, could any thing be more natural, than that the Almighty, whose mercies are so conspicuously great, and who watches over every part of his creation, should endeavour to recover man from his lapsed state? and recall him to a proper sense of his duty, by revealing to him his will, together with the fatal consequences of his future disobedience, and the glorious rewards which he would render himself eligible to, if he kept in view, and acted up to, the first intention of his creation?

Man was evidently intended by the Almighty to be his vicegerent and representative in this world; and accordingly he has ordained, that all other created beings should look up to and obey him. To fit him for so high a station, he has endowed him alone with the faculties of reason, judgment, discretion, and, above all, a thorough comprehension of his own nature, whereby he is enabled to form conclusions, to perceive the distinguished rank he holds in creation, and the different duties which are incumbent upon him,

and which necessarily attach to his elevated station.

But as every ambassador and representative acknowledges and receives instructions from some higher power, so man is taught to look up to, and acknowledge his dependence on, the Divine Author of his being; to inform himself of his will, and to render him a grateful obedience; in as much as he himself receives obedience from those whom his Maker has made subject to his controul and dominion.

Agreeable to this he was made erect; as well to inform him, that there was a power and wisdom greatly beyond his own, which claimed universal admiration and service; as to signify to him, that the heavens which he contemplated, and which he was by nature raised up towards, would be his final place of destination, if he acted agreeably to the will of his Creator, as religion should reveal it unto him.

Having thus far considered the reasonableness and propriety of religion, I shall offer a few observations on its necessity and usefulness to man in a social state, and the benign influence it has upon the human mind.

But as its necessity has in some measure been considered already, under the head of Freethinking, the less will of course be needful to that effect here. I observed, under the head of Freethinking, that it was to the influence of religion on the mind we were indebted for the regular and impartial discharge of some of the most important duties intrusted to man in his official capacity. Let us now see how far we are to acknowledge the influence of religion, in dictating and preserving those relative duties, which are equally essential to the happiness of every individual, and alike incumbent upon all. And here we may trace her influence to the most pious and truly meritorious acts that adorn human nature;---to universal beneficence and philanthropy, charity, and forbearance.

The laws of Christianity (the religion of this country) are certainly such as the poet * very justly delineates them :---“ Laws which, softening nature by humanity, melt nations into brotherhood.” For to what but religion shall we attribute the numerous charitable institutions which have spread themselves over these kingdoms, since the establishment of Christianity in them ; and that our hospitals and houses of industry shall be said to rival our royal palaces ? What but religion can restrain and correct those evil propensities of the mind, such as envy, hatred, cruelty, and revenge, which may be considered as the canker of society ? It is true, indeed, that religion is not always powerful enough to check such passions ; but we all know, that no one professing Christianity, can with impunity indulge them to the detriment even of his enemy : and a truly religious man will not so much as wish it ; they are passions of much too turbulent a nature for the peace and purity of

* Hill.

his soul. To admit them even as guests into his heart, he must turn out companions and old associates far more entertaining and consolatory; and who have long been to him a source of delight. Such a one looks with an eye of compassion, rather than resentment, on his enemies. For (as Goldsmith beautifully expresses it), "taught by that power that pities him, he learns to pity them."

Religion, too, is absolutely necessary for creating that confidence, which, as individuals, we are continually obliged to place in each other.--- Would any of us think it prudent to deposit a sum of money for charitable purposes in the hands of an infidel, to be disposed of at his discretion? Should we not, at least, prefer a man of religious principles, to take upon him such a trust? Would the sick man, when he calls his friends around him, and is about to make choice of one for his executor, another as guardian to his children, and a third as his own comforter and companion in his sickness, select such men.

from amongst atheists and infidels, or from amongst the virtuous and religious?

Finally, where shall the dying man gather confidence and fortitude to meet the trying hour of separation from this world's goods, and all the different objects of his attachment? Whence shall he satisfy the hasty cravings and enquiries of conscience, respecting that eternal state which shall then be opening upon him, if not from religion?

Many a stout-hearted free-liver has not been able to bear the terrible perturbation of the soul, at that gloomy hour, when its final separation from the body has been about to take place; but after holding it unmanly to act the Christian throughout life, has played the woman at the closing scene, and acknowledged, with the deepest contrition, the error of his former ways.--- And, indeed, what can we conceive more trying than such a moment to one who is unable to draw one single ray of hope or comfort from the

past, present, or to come? when the busy mind runs back through all the various scenes and actions of past life, in search of comfort, to have no one point for her to rest upon! Again, when she would penetrate the gloomy chaos which presents itself before her, to have no guide, or the least glimpse of light to direct her way! With such a one, the very objects which should soften and assuage the anguish of this melancholy scene, administer only to the distresses of it.--- For, when his friends draw near to take a last farewell, reflection will whisper to his soul, that they part, never to meet again; or, if they should, that it will be in misery extreme.

In fact, through every stage of life, as well as at its close, religion is evidently so necessary and useful, as to furnish us with one of the strongest arguments for its truth.

For, as God hath not, through the whole course of nature, withheld from us any thing absolutely necessary for our present state; and we

find that religion is indispensably necessary for our peace and comfort, and, by conclusions, I may add, for our very existence here, as well as our happiness hereafter, so we might as naturally have looked for it from above, as for any other blessing we enjoy. If, then, religion is of divine original, it follows that those writings which instruct us in it are so likewise; and that they are given (as St. Paul speaks) by inspiration of God.

Those who hold religion lightly, are, for the most part, men who have never considered it with a mind sufficiently enlarged and disengaged to take in the extensiveness and importance of the subject. They begin to dig in search of living waters, but before they have got any depth, finding that they must penetrate through a quarry rather harder than they expected to meet with, they give up the undertaking, and assert in their defence, that the fountain is not there; whereas, had they only persevered, they would have found the spring, and the waters would have arisen and

met them. But even these acknowledge the propriety of religion in their hearts, though they disown it in their practices. For, the very man who treats with levity, not to say contempt, every religious injunction, and wantonly takes pains to shew that he lives under no controul from the laws of God, would, at the moment that he is publishing his immorality to the world, feel himself highly offended, and seriously resent it, should any one speak of him as an unprincipled immoral character, or as one in whom you must place no confidence beyond the reach of the human eye. And what can prove the thoughtlessness and inconsistency of such a character more? No sooner is his favourite garb, in which he is proud of appearing in public, taken off and held up to his view, than he quarrels with it, and disowns it.

We are apt to acquire a prejudice in our youth against religion, from a supposition that it precludes all cheerfulness and pleasantry of manners; whereas it has a direct contrary ef-

fect. An internal sense of virtue, and a conscious rectitude of mind, which a religious deportment begets, are generally marked by an external cheerfulness and a lively good will.--- For religion (as a well known writer observes) does not any where prescribe a starched squeezed countenance, a stiff formal gait, a singularity of manners and habit, or any affected forms and modes of speech, different from the reasonable part of mankind.

A TRANSLATION

OF

DIFFERENT QUOTATIONS

IN THIS WORK,

WITH THE SUBJECTS TO WHICH THEY ARE ANNEXED.

GAMING.

(1) If any one performs a meritorious act with labour, the labour is soon gone, but the merit of having performed it remains; but he that doth a base act with pleasure, the pleasure flies away, and the disgrace remains.

This passage is taken from Musonius, and in Greek runs thus:

Αν τι πράξεις

Καλὸν μετὰ πόνου ὁ μὲν πόνος οἰχίται, τὸ δὲ καλὸν μένει,
Αν τι ποιήσης αἰσχροὺς μετὰ ἡδονῆς, τὸ μὲν ἡδὺ οἰχίται,
Τὸ δὲ αἰσχρὸν μένει.

DUELLING.

(2) Let who will deride, with me right reason will ever be stronger than common opinion.

SWEARING.

(3) This is ordered, that reason should check rashness.

FREETHINKING.

(4) Nor do I agree with those, who have lately begun to teach that the soul perishes together with the body, and that the whole of man is destroyed by death.

INJUSTICE.

(5) That which is unjust can be neither expedient nor useful.

LYING.

(6) He who wishes to be Thraso will never want a Gnatho.

SLANDER.

(7) These trifles lead to serious evils.

DRINKING.

(8) Wine, drank moderately, exhilarates the spirits; but taken immoderately, it stirs up strife.

CONTENTMENT.

(10) Those who look for happiness out of themselves, find every stage of life troublesome; but they who have an internal fund of enjoyment, to them nothing appears grievous which is produced by natural causes.

FRIENDSHIP.

(11) What can be more pleasing than to have one with whom you may converse as freely as with yourself? What great pleasure would there be in prosperity, without some one to partake of it with you?

A SHORT
EPISTOLARY CORRESPONDENCE
BETWEEN
TOWN AND COUNTRY.

Omne tulit punctum, qui miscuit utile dulci,
Lectorem delectando, pariterque monendo.

HOR.

A SHORT

REMARKS ON THE

REMARKS

AND CONVICTION

OF THE

CONTENTS

OF THE

EPISTOLARY CORRESPONDENCE.

LETTER I.

DESCRIBES the pleasures of a walk by moon-light ; and contains a sentimental conversation, in which reflections on the immortality of the soul are introduced.

LETTER II.

Delineates some of the amusements of town. Gives a description of the new theatre in Russel-street, Covent-garden, &c. &c. &c.

LETTER III.

Shews the impropriety of indulging an attachment, where the circumstances attending it are such as oppose the completion of our wishes.

CONTENTS

OF THE

MINISTRIAL CORRESPONDENCE

LETTER I

On the subject of the proposed amendment to the constitution, in which the rights of the people are discussed, and the necessity of a more perfect union is shown.

LETTER II

On the subject of the proposed amendment to the constitution, in which the rights of the people are discussed, and the necessity of a more perfect union is shown.

LETTER III

On the subject of the proposed amendment to the constitution, in which the rights of the people are discussed, and the necessity of a more perfect union is shown.

LETTER I.

DEAR TOWNLEY,

Woodstock, 1796.

WE are all of us highly obliged to you for the lively display of entertaining incidents which your last contained, and would willingly send you as much amusement in return, if we knew how; but you must take the will for the deed; considering that we are almost at the extremity of news and fashion, you at the fountain head. If, however, a minute detail of our present pastime will awaken any pleasing sensations in your mind, from a recollection of those hours which you so lately spent amongst us, it is here at your service. The ladies have challenged me, since you left us, to give them a course of reading, and have left the choice of books to my discretion: I have accordingly got them Richardson's works, knowing that something of the novel kind plays softest on the female mind. We were

in a very affecting part of his *Clarissa* the other evening, when Bentley came in, exclaiming that it was one of the most beautiful moonlight evenings he had ever beheld! but perceiving that no notice was taken of his observation, and that the whole company were a little crystal-eyed, he seemed, I thought, to consider himself as an intruder; and, if I guess aright, was somewhat wounded at not meeting, on his entrance, a more lively reception from Matilda. I shut the book; and, throwing it on the table, proposed a walk in Blenheim-park, which was instantly seconded, *una voce*, by the ladies and the rest of the company; cloaks and hats were rather snatched at, than fetched, and off we set. As soon as we were got into the street, which was light as noon-day, from the splendour of the moon, our ears were caught by a most charming swell of melody, from the distant bells of Oxford; which whet in no small degree our relish for the fancy we were upon.--- In about ten minutes we entered the park, which presented us with a scene peculiarly beautiful

and solemn. The moon shone bright upon the bridge before us, and the reflection of it on the waters, which were hushed and still as infant sleep, had a most pleasing effect. The deep and extensive shadows from the lofty lime-trees on the rising ground in front, cast an awful gloom around, and formed a beautiful contrast to the glittering waters, at the banks of which we halted for a few minutes, to indulge this delightful solitude, and to draw in the refreshing zephyrs, which came to us across the water, strongly impregnated with the fragrant and enlivening odour of the lime. The nightingale here saluted us from a neighbouring hawthorn, to whom all nature, as well as ourselves, seemed listening.

This heart-expanding scene, added to the impression which what we had been reading left upon the mind, gave the conversation a serious turn, and every one (except Bentley) seemed ready to exclaim, with honest Sterne, "I am sure that I have a soul." Bentley, however,

though more thoughtful than I have ever seen him, appeared less gratified than the rest of the company; and seemed inclined, every now and then, to force a degree of levity and merriment which the rest of our little party were not at all disposed to give into. Matilda said little; but was softened, even to tears, with the awful grandeur of the scene around us. We bent our course across the bridge, and made up to the monument on which is recorded the glorious victory gained by the Duke of Marlborough at the battle of Blenheim. While we were before it, Bentley remarked, that whatever services he might do his country, he'd be c . . . d if he should thank any one for remembering him to the living, at a time when he was so much beneath them, as to be nothing better than the dust on which they trod. I was about to reply to him, when Matilda very archly said, it was a natural observation for him, and shook her head. But suppose, continued she, that instead of his being the dust beneath our feet, that great man should at this time be looking down upon

us from some of those bright worlds above.---

Ay, says Bentley (turning it off in his usual way) then there's nothing more likely than that he might fall in love with my dear Matilda, and think me a very impertinent fellow. I said that I thought it was highly becoming in a country to express a grateful sense of services which at different times might be done it: and exceedingly natural for those who lived at the time, to wish that after ages should behold the acknowledgment they had made, and thereby perceive that merit and virtue were not lost upon them.---

Bentley seemed to connect this conclusion of my remark with some secret thoughts of his own, and taking Matilda by the hand, walked a few paces from us. Matilda presently, however, halted for us to come up with them; and as we stept forward altogether in a row, the conversation rose insensibly from one lofty topic to another, till we arrived at that most important one, the immortality of the soul. I know, Townley, that you, as well as myself, like sometimes to indulge a solemn thought, when it comes ac-

compained by virtue and instruction; I therefore send you the purport of what passed upon the subject. Captain Bright, who was with us, and is, you know, turned of sixty, very pleasantly said, that he believed he was growing young again, or that he had associated with young people till he had caught their spirit; for he never remembered to have enjoyed a walk by moon-light more when young than he did that night. Upon this, one of the ladies asked him, whether he should like to go back to his infancy, and relieve every minute which had brought him from it to his present age; treading over again, step by step, the exact same track he had been travelling through? He shook his head, and declared that he should consider it as the greatest punishment that could be inflicted upon him. I could not help observing, that this declaration of the Captain greatly corroborated the doctrine of the immortality of the soul; and convinced me that our souls were pressing forward to a more perfect state: that in this life they were only guides and directors of the body; and that

they were looking to the next for the completion of their own happiness and gratification. Bentley could not see why the exact quality and nature of a future state, whatever it might be, should not be communicated to us. To this one of the ladies replied, that it did not appear to be the course of God's providence, to give us an unlimited insight into futurity; we found in our present state, that we did not know one hour what the next would produce, and that our ignorance in this particular contributed to our happiness; for we did not so much as wish to live over again the time that was past. She thought that what was revealed to us, respecting the immortality of the soul, was quite sufficient to animate our hopes and excite our fears, and that we ought not to wish for any further proof; concluding with a passage out of Thomson's Seasons—

“ Here the
 Cloud, so wills eternal Providence, sits deep:
 Enough for us to know that this dark state,
 In wayward passions lost, and vain pursuits,
 This infancy of being cannot prove

The final issue of the works of God,
By boundless love, and perfect wisdom form'd,
And ever rising with the rising mind."

Captain Bright said, that he had as firm a belief of the immortality of the soul as he had of his present existence; and protested that he could not account for an enlightened nation, like the French, casting off so grand a hope, and which was founded equally on reason and revelation, otherwise than that they had indulged themselves in vice and sensuality, till they had totally overcome the influence of conscience, and suppressed every faculty of the soul: and applied to them these words, from Milton's Paradise Lost---

"Hard shall be harden'd, blind be blinded more,
That they may stumble on, and deeper fall."

He observed that he had read much on the immortality of the soul, but that he had made two observations, which confirmed his belief of it as much as any thing he had ever seen or heard upon the subject. One was, that the soul was capable of receiving a much greater degree of happiness and enjoyment than any object here

could impress it with; and that it delighted most in scenes where there was the least confusion of matter, and where it could, as it were, extricate itself from all earthly concerns. This, he thought, proved it to be spiritual, and that it thirsted after its proper *natus*, which was placed above. The other was, that the immortality of the soul, or the future existence of man after death, was perfectly consistent with the course of nature and God's universal dispensations. For we see (says he) that night succeeds the day, and ushers in day again; winter follows the summer, and ushers in summer again. All nature renovates, arrives at its maturity, and decays; lays dormant awhile, and then renovates again. Thus death appears to be merely an introduction into life,---*Mors janua est vitæ*. Captain Bright had just finished his observations, as we entered again the streets of Woodstock, and filing off two by two, to leave room upon the pavement, the subject was changed for one better adapted to the streets.

I hope, Townley, that this letter will not be put into your hands, either just as you are going to, or returning from, some of those gay scenes and fashionable dissipations you speak of; but if it should, I entreat you to throw it aside, and peruse it at a more convenient season. You'll perceive that I have had a design upon you, and have attempted to make you one of the party in this evening's frolic. I confess it; and am commissioned by the ladies to include them in my acknowledgments to you, for having done the same in your last, and thereby introduced us to your town amusements. Bentley—— but more of him in my next; I shall only say at present, that he is either a very base or a very impolitic man.

Your's, sincerely,

C. RUREMAN.

LETTER II.*St. James's-street, 1796.*

I do not know, Charles, what possesses me; but ever since I received your last, I have perfectly longed to return again to Oxford, and to resume my former way of living. I have been racketted and tumbled about this busy town, till I'm heartily sick of it. At Oxford, you know, we are busied in arranging our studies, so as to leave time for our visits and amusements; but here the principal art appears to be that of knowing how to kill time, from the first opening of your eyes till you close them again. The morning, which is there devoted to study, and which whets and enlivens your relish for the entertainments of the evening, is here lounged away in the streets, fruit-shops, subscription houses, &c. and when the hour arrives that you should dress for dinner, you feel yourself just as well inclined to prepare for bed.

I have, for the last day or two, turned my place-book into a journal, and recorded in it every thing that I thought was calculated for your tea-table at Woodstock; but faith, Charles, you must release me from my promise of entertaining you with town occurrences, for they are become so very indifferent to me, that it is impossible my relation of them should be any longer interesting to you or your party.

We met on Saturday, in Hyde-park, Lady Charlotte Bentley, who is just come to town: we were galloping our horses; and, from the number of horsemen present, had no opportunity of making enquiries, or of taking any other notice than the common civilities *en passant*.

The ride in this beautiful park has been widened and greatly improved since we were last in town; but though there appears to have been no labour nor pains of any kind spared in rendering it commodious, there is, nevertheless, a great inconvenience left, which is too conspicuous, I

think, to have escaped the attention of the inspector; and therefore it has most probably been purposely left, *ad captandum oculum*, notwithstanding the inconvenience arising from it. The road directly opposite the south gate of Kensington-gardens is widened so as to let into the ride a tree, whose branches extend a great length, and hang low. It forms a grateful shade in summer, and has, to be sure, a very romantic appearance. But should your horse take fright, there is great danger of its catching your head as well as your eyes. While we were there on Saturday, a lady, mounted on a high horse, was run away with; the bridle had slipped out of her hand, and the horse ran immediately under the branches of this tree: we expected, as he approached the tree, to see her dashed in pieces; but, with great presence of mind, she laid herself almost upon the neck of her horse, and thereby escaped the danger. But surely it is carrying fancy rather too far, to indulge it at the expence of personal safety.

Walpole and myself had determined on seeing the whole of Shakspeare's Hamlet this evening, at the new theatre, and dined in private for that purpose : for the hour of dining is now so ridiculously late in town, that dinner comes on table much about the time that the curtain draws up at the play-house. If we could suppose that this unnatural hour for taking the principal meal of the day, was generally adopted through a blind obedience to fashion, it would give us a very unfavourable opinion of the wisdom of the present age. But, no doubt, the late hour which the House * usually breaks up at, is what has given rise to it amongst people of condition.--- We had reserved this evening (as I before observed) to ourselves, and managed to quit the table, and get into the theatre before the curtain drew up. We took our seat in the upper boxes ; but as we wished to make our observations on the house, and to look a little about us, we changed our first place for the third bench

from the orchestra in the pit, where we had a full view of the building. It appears to have been fitted up with much elegance and taste. The different tiers of boxes are supported by very light columns, which are calculated so as not to obstruct the sight. The inside of the house is not as large as you would suppose from the appearance it makes from without; but the stage is very spacious, and runs a considerable way back. The building is lofty, and the gods in the upper gallery appear literally above the clouds. We were proceeding to make minuter observations, when the musicians, who had just given us a lively air, came hastily to their seats, and the curtain drew up: at the same moment the doors of several of the boxes were thrown open, and the Prince and Princess of Wales, with many of the nobility, presented themselves before us. The company stood up, and seemed anxious of expressing the satisfaction they felt in receiving the beautiful foreigner amongst them. The Princess possesses, in addition to her personal accomplishments, a countenance expres-

sive of affection and great sensibility. She appeared highly gratified at beholding the luminous countenances which shone around her, and was not a little agitated, I could perceive, at the warm reception that was given her. The attention of the house was wholly fixed upon the Princess for some time after the play commenced. And these words of Horatio to Hamlet, "*Defer your admiration for a while with an attentive ear,*" were spoken very emphatically by the actor, who, no doubt, thought that it was time for the audience to turn their eyes upon the stage, and to shew that the Princess had not absorbed all its powers of attraction. Indeed, I never saw the performers exert themselves more, or acquit themselves better; every character, from the highest to the lowest, merited attention and applause. Kemble's Hamlet was a most inimitable piece of acting: the judgment which this performer displays, merits the highest encomium; he throws new lights on the different characters he undertakes, and each cadence proves him to have a most correct and perfect

conception of the author. The Ghost was well personated. But I wonder that Shakspeare, who was so great an admirer of Nature, did not draw this character with fewer deviations from her.--- He makes Horatio to stop the Ghost by spreading out his arms; and, as it is represented by a man, he either does stop it, or turns it out of its course. Whereas, our idea of an apparition is confined to spirit; if such things exist, we conclude that they are aerial. Moreover, I conceive that the sullen majesty of a spectre, and the silent horror with which we behold it, is very much lessened by the apparition's speaking; a degree of familiarity is immediately created, and our apprehensions are done away. Gestures should be the only expression of ghosts; for where further information is received from them, the object of their appearance, viz. to excite terror, is weakened, if not lost. The part of Ophelia was well supported, and the natural simplicity of that character preserved.

But this vein of criticism, which I have insensibly run into, is a digression your ladies will not forgive me for; put it in a parenthesis, or miss it, and give my respects to them in its stead.

The play concluded with the general approbation of the house, and I believe the audience never had their admiration more equally divided than it was that night, between the play, the performers, and the august stranger. As soon as the curtain dropped, the gods vociferated forth their congratulations to the royal pair, by demanding repeatedly their favourite tunes, which are calculated to blazon out their honest loyalty, and to remind them of their national consequence. The musicians played with great spirit, and the whole house arose, and joined chorus.----A lively entertainment followed, which appeared to be received with much satisfaction by the Princess, who stayed till near the conclusion of it.

We breakfasted the following morning in Bedford-square, where was Colonel Bentley; he appeared to be in high spirits, and was very facetious respecting his brother; he was certain, he said, that he had fallen into some fresh thralldom, and was curious in finding out what female attractions Woodstock afforded. There was no such thing as making a serious reply to his humorous interrogatories.—But what the devil, Charles, is it you mean respecting his brother? He cannot, sure, have any designs upon Matilda? I know him to be a man of unbounded passions, without judgment or principle to direct or restrain them; but he dares not, I think, entertain a thought derogatory to her honour, or unworthy of her condition! Let me know in your next what it is you allude to concerning him. The Colonel accompanied us on horseback this day, and in the evening we dined with him and his lady. Lady Charlotte is really a charming woman, and being naturally slim, and some few months married, the present fashion of hiding the waste becomes her exceed-

ingly : with her, this fashion appears to be rather the dictate of modesty than the whim of fancy ; and, at the same time that it adorns her person, it gives you a favourable opinion of the purity of her mind. But the fair spinsters who have assumed this fashion, must have adopted it without considering its tendency. For in them it does not strike you as the garb of Virtue, but rather as an accommodation to those who may have parted with her. Where is the virgin that would not be wounded to the soul at having her chastity called in question, when she had given no cause for it by her conduct ? How ridiculous, then, is it to give rise to the smallest suspicion that way, by the dress she makes choice of !

Walpole protests that he'll not marry till this fashion is laid aside ; for (in his own words) " he's determined to know who's who, and what's what, before he pays a visit to the altar."

Our evening's entertainment here concluded with a ball, which was supported with much

life and spirit; many of the beau monde were present, and the women were all goddesses; there was such a captivating display of beauty, that we suspect the Colonel had been selecting Venuses from amongst the whole circle of his acquaintance, to keep Lady Charlotte in countenance, and to divert our eyes from feasting too much upon her.

I believe, Charles, I have written you almost as long a letter as I received from Woodstock; but if 'tis read half as often as I have since perused your's, I shall have the satisfaction to know that I have only tired myself, by keeping the pen so long in hand. Tell the ladies they make me very proud by their approbation of my services; but that I'm too impatient to come amongst them to obtain any further acknowledgments of that kind. I shall return to Oxford the first of next month.

Your's,

R. TOWNLER.

LETTER III.

DEAR TOWNLEY,

Woodstock, Tuesday, 1796.

THE ladies are highly offended at you for concluding your last without giving them a more interesting account of Col. Bentley's ball. They have drawn up a protest against you, and had signed it, *nemine contradicente*; but just as I was about to copy it, by their directions, a certain lady erased her name, and presented herself as counsel for the defendant; it was not fair, she thought, on further consideration, to arraign and convict an absent man, who had never had a copy of his indictment. There was much murmuring amongst your fair impeachers, who, it seems, have taken offence at some other parts of your letter, and are determined to pull a feather with you, as soon as ever you come down. They all declared, with a very significant nod of the head, that if the protest was withdrawn,

the impeachment, for more defaults than one, should stand good: so I advise you to prepare yourself against the first of next month, for a most pointed display of female declamation.

But, to be serious, I have to relate a circumstance, which, I am sure, will give you as much uneasiness as it has done every one here. Poor Matilda, or at least as much of her as it was in her power to remove, set off the day after I wrote last for Northampton, in company with her mother.

Bentley is much to blame; it does not appear, however, that he has been prosecuting a system of seduction; but finding that he had a strong interest in Matilda, and that he had insinuated himself into her regard, not to say affection for him, he has indulged a weakness, till it has insensibly led him into, I was going to say, a vice, but great imprudence of behaviour at least. He explained himself to me upon his conduct, shortly after Matilda left us. He acknowledges

to have perceived, that she had a growing partiality towards him; but protests that he had not a sufficient command of his passions to suppress it, or to deny himself that pleasure which he took in her company, though he knew that they never could come together in a legal manner. This circumstance, however, was concealed from Matilda, and therefore not the smallest impropriety attaches to her conduct in having received his attentions: for, no doubt, she expected every day, from the general tenor of his conduct, that he would declare himself more fully. I could not help condemning him, from his own account of this affair, and reproaching him with much asperity. He has been playing with the feelings, not to say the honour, of a most amiable young woman, and sacrificing her peace of mind to a little present pastime and amusement. He acquits himself, it is true, of having had any designs upon her honour; but the very pointed manner in which he addressed himself to her in public as well as private companies, and the numerous little attentions and civilities which were shewn by him, and mo-

destly received on her part, naturally raised a report in the neighbourhood that they were shortly to be made one: and to what degree her honour may be tarnished in the public eye, by the present delinquency, who can tell? He urges, in his behalf, the strength of his passions, and the warmth of his attachment towards her, which, however, I cannot admit as any extenuation of his offence. For what sort of passions, under such circumstances, could he indulge? If by the strength of his passions, he means the strength of his affections towards her, surely her happiness would have had a stronger influence on his actions than the gratification of his own desires.

I offended him much in telling him, that there appeared to me to be not only a want of affection, but even wanton cruelty in his conduct; for to keep a mind, softened as he acknowledges to have perceived Matilda's was, in suspense a single day, on a matter in which she was so nearly concerned, was certainly cruel to the last degree. He thanked me very kindly,

and, in the same breath, c——d me most heartily; then took two or three hasty turns up and down the room, protesting all the while that he would follow her. I am obliged, for the present, to lay down my pen, but will resume it the first opportunity.

THURSDAY NOON.

ON a further investigation of this matter, we can't help being sorry for Bentley, at the same time that we sympathize with the feelings of poor Matilda. For, notwithstanding all that has been said, and much as he has been censured by us all, he, nevertheless, appears to have a sincere regard for Matilda; and his great sensibility has turned our reproaches into compassion for him. The sequel of his story is this: at the death of his father he came into a small patrimony, which was here represented as being something considerable; but which, he assures us, was converted into money, to defray his expences at the university; and that what remains of it is a mere trifle. But that shortly after he

was matriculated at Oxford, an old aunt left him an estate of three thousand pounds per ann. with this proviso, that he should marry a first cousin, with whom he had been bred up from his infancy, and who is now just coming of age. The estate is to be sold, and to go entirely out of the family, unless the parties approve of the conditions on which they are to enjoy it. Bentley speaks highly of the lady, and says that he felt himself perfectly happy in what the old lady had enjoined him to do, till he became acquainted with Matilda; but that he is now one of the most miserable creatures on the face of the earth.

The circumstances of this affair are very distressing on all sides. Matilda's fortune, you know, is small, and Bentley's, it seems, is next to nothing. Moreover, should they be willing to live all their lives in obscurity, and even to sacrifice all the enjoyments and conveniencies of life to their attachment to each other, yet how could Bentley excuse himself to the lady to whom

he's betrothed, and who has long received his addresses? He has been endeavouring, for some time past, to engage this lady's affections, and is now, it seems, in possession of them: How cruel and unjust would it be, then, to deprive her at once of the fortune she is expecting to partake of, and the man whom she has been taught to look upon as her husband, and towards whom she must consequently have been training and directing her affections.

Matilda had a part to act, towards the conclusion of her stay with us, exceedingly trying and irksome. Bentley's increasing fondness obliged her to assume a vast deal of reserve in his presence; though such a carriage was evidently as displeasing to herself as it was to him. He was very desirous of accompanying her part of the way to Northampton, the evening before her departure; but received from Matilda and her mother such a serious and positive rejection of his services, that he had not spirits or assurance to repeat his request. As we sat over the

table after supper, there was frequently a general silence, and all the company seemed to participate in the feelings of Matilda, whose countenance was alternately filled with affection, sorrow, indignation, and reproach. Bentley was conscious that he appeared to every one in a blacker character than he really deserved, yet knew not how to do away their prejudice, or to give them a better opinion of himself. When he addressed himself to Matilda, it was in a manner that seemed to acknowledge the propriety of her carriage towards him, and was, at the same time, expressive of his own uneasiness at not being entitled to a greater freedom of speech. Matilda's natural pride, and a just sense of her own dignity, would not permit her to shew herself openly offended; and hence arose that internal perturbation of the spirits, which she had not power to conceal. Every one was in pain for her, which Bentley perceived; and having filled a bumper, which he drank, with many compliments to Matilda, he wished her and her mother (in a manner pecu-

liarly energetic) all the happiness and comfort that this world could bestow upon them; and arose to take his leave, not a little agitated himself. Matilda assumed now an air of facetious civility and composure, that caught the attention and admiration of every one; and but for a little faltering of the voice, she conducted herself with great propriety and resolution. Bentley took courage upon this, to solicit again her permission, and that of her mother's, to accompany them part of the way to Northampton.--- Matilda was silent: when her mother, with somewhat of a satirical acknowledgment of his goodness, but with perfect complaisance and good humour, declined, as before, his proffered services. He then took a respectful leave, with a countenance expressive of much embarrassment and reluctance at parting. As soon as he was gone, Matilda forced a flight of spirits, which we all secretly assisted her in keeping up: but fearful of distressing her by being present at the fall of them, we shortly after took our leave of each other, and particularly of Matilda and

her mother, and dispersed. They set off early the next morning, that they might get into Northampton to dinner. Five minutes after the carriage drove from the door, Bentley arrived on horseback from Oxford; he had rode, he said, six miles in three times as many minutes, in hopes of catching them before they left Woodstock; for that he could not rest till he had made a full declaration of his heart and mind, and explained himself to Matilda. It was with the greatest difficulty I dissuaded him from following the carriage. At length, however, he gave up his design, and requested that he might breakfast with me alone that morning. At first his spirits were so depressed, and his passions at times so tumultuous, that I could make little of him; and very high words arose between us on the subject, before he vouchsafed to disclose those circumstances which I have related in the former part of this letter, and which account for his never having declared his passion for Matilda; though at the same time they prove him to be a very impolitic man, and certainly cen-

surable for having indulged such a passion under those circumstances. We have just received a letter from the mother of Matilda, who gives us such a favourable account of her daughter's health and spirits, that we have prevailed on Bentley to let the matter rest where it does, and to return into Devonshire; where, it seems, a worthy young lady, and an estate of three thousand pounds a year, await his coming to take possession of them.

Our party here has diminished so much of late, that we are beginning to recruit afresh, and have sent letters of invitation to a most choice selection of the humorous and cheerful of both sexes. Captain Bright and his lady left us last week; and Bentley quits Oxford, and sets off for Devonshire to-morrow. The two Miss Howards remain. This, to you, I think, will be as acceptable a piece of intelligence, as the circumstance itself is gratifying to the rest of us here. We promise ourselves much pleasure, by uniting the lively pleasantry of those

whom we have invited, with the sentiment and benevolence that mark the conversation of these young ladies.

In respect to yourself, I will not flatter you, by saying that the ladies are impatient to receive you amongst them; but it seems that your return is the most consolatory circumstance that could have accompanied the discontinuance of a correspondence that has afforded them so much amusement.

Your's,

RUREMAN.

P. s. You did not say whether Walpole would accompany you to Oxford; but we take it for granted that he will: and the ladies are preparing, I hear, to take their revenge on him, as well as yourself, for breaking in upon their department.

N. B. These letters were added to this work, purely to introduce it into the hands of those who read only for entertainment. The writer has endeavoured, as much as possible, to blend in them pleasurable incidents with useful observations; but in doing that, he does not pretend to have confined himself to matters of fact.--- If the smallest instruction is insinuated through them, and the reader's imagination entertained, he trusts that they will be considered as a proper appendage to that which precedes them.

FINIS.



